



MEMORANDUM



DATE: June 15, 2001

TO: Joe Taylor, Deputy Executive Director, WRO
Olivia McLean, Director - Emergency Management

FROM: Allen Vann, Inspector General
John Lynch, Lead Information Systems Auditor

SUBJECT: May 30, 2001 Hurricane Freddy Exercise - Report #01-13

On May 30, 2001, we participated as observers of the Hurricane Freddy exercise that tests the District's Emergency Operations Center's (EOC) readiness for a real hurricane event. Our comments on the exercise follow.

Remedy Reporting Application

In this year's event the staff used a new system that enhanced phone-in - briefing reports from the various District locations. This system referred to as the "Remedy EOC Briefing Application" provided a common template that could be displayed and printed to ensure that each location was providing the necessary information in a standard format.

This system is a significant improvement over the previous free form reporting used in past exercises. However, not all locations used the briefing format. This is not unrealistic, since during an actual event network communications, staff support, or time constraints might preclude the staff from using the Remedy system for scheduled briefings. Nevertheless, all reporting locations should get an opportunity to practice using the Remedy application.

Hard copies of the reports can be printed and distributed to the EOC support teams prior to the briefing to enable staff to concentrate on the briefing and avoid the necessity to take notes during the "slide presentation." In addition, there was some difficulty in keeping the slide presentation in the same order as the phone briefing.

A "Remedy EOC Briefing Application" manual was available for staff to use in developing the briefing reports and it appears to be an easy to use effective guide for the staff.

EM2000 Messaging System

The EM2000 messaging software (EM2000) seems to be the most critical technology for the successful operation of the EOC.

Although training was made available, there were staff members who still lacked the skills to properly interact with EM2000. The Information Technology Division staff presence in the EOC provided a critical link in updating staff, when necessary, on the use of the system. However, EM2000 training and refresher courses should be required for all participants in the EOC. The inability of the participants to access messages and respond, distracted the staff from concentrating on the content of the message.

The availability of the “EM2000’s EM Tracker Training Manual” and “EM2000’s EM Tracker for Support Staff” manuals provided staff with a necessary and simple reference guide to using the system.

Comments by Support Teams

On May 30th, the day of the exercise, we made observations and also obtained comments from staff members. On June 6, 2001 we debriefed various key staff members including “Officers”, “Liaisons”, and “Section Chiefs” to discuss their “Ups and Downs” reports. Staff participants raised many of the same issues we previously reported to you subsequent to last year’s exercise. The following summarizes our observations and the comments received:

- Incomplete information contained in messages delayed action.
- Some messages concern more than one item and need to be split.
- Messages are not sorted or filtered to allow priority messages to be handled by appropriate section.
- Messages are not easily identifiable as “Information” or “Action.”
- Messages that should have been forwarded to the Control Room went to Field Coordinators.

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- Not enough equipment (PC's) at all tables, causing a message bottleneck for some Section Chiefs.
 - Computer difficulty in logging on, or recognizing the unit (i.e. rebooted to wrong profile.)
 - Additional pool of available staff is needed to handle 24-hour coverage for administrative functions at the field locations.
 - List of user names and sign-in information was not at each section table.
 - Based on the workload, the Disaster Analysis and Planning Section might have benefited by designating a Deputy Section Head to assist the lead with messages.

Other Exercise Observations

Other observations that were brought to our attention during the exercise included:

- There was no copier (as specified in the room layout plan) in the EOC. As a result staff was using the Fax machine as a copier or going to other locations outside the EOC for their copier needs. (In some cases this delayed Fax input from field locations.)
- There was no inventory list of available District resources (Airboats, Draglines, Chainsaws...), their quantity and location for the logistics team to reference in meeting resource needs.
- There was no inventory list of the location and quantity of toxic material (Fuel, Herbicides...) for use by the staff in determining the potential for "spills" as a result of flooding or wind damage to storage facilities.
- With the turnover of staff (including managers and supervisors) the operations of the EOC and the associated responsibilities should be part of required new employee orientation training.

Additional topics discussed at the debriefing meeting included:

- EM2000 live training in EOC set-up room prior to exercise,
- Roll-up/consolidation of Situation and Remedy reports,
- Remedy report display was confusing,
- Room set-up caused problems with hardware configurations in sections,
- Lack of phone lists for key contacts at section tables,
- Pre-exercise walk through for EOC team leaders,
- Additional training for EOC message takers on the operations of the District, and
- T-shirts to identify section team members.

Conclusions

Based upon our observations, the debriefing meeting, and the input through the “Ups and Downs” reports the following items should be considered:

- **Mandatory EM2000 training for all EOC participants** just prior to the Hurricane Season in a simulated EOC environment.
- **District Operations orientation training** for all message takers.
- **Required meetings of each section** with the Emergency Manager and Section Chief to review the roles and responsibilities of the team.
- **A tabletop simulation** facilitated by the Emergency Manager with the participation of the “Chiefs” (officers, liaisons and section) prior to the hurricane exercise.
- **A review of the Technical Equipment** requirements (PC’s, printers, fax, copier, telephones, . . .) for each section.
- **A configuration test** of all equipment as part of the EOC setup process.
- **Phone lists** of key contacts should be developed and maintained for each section.

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- **Inventory lists of both equipment resources and toxic materials;** including location and quantity should be developed and maintained for use by the Resource Logistics and Safety teams.
 - **Further refinements** as necessary of the EM2000 system to better accommodate the needs of the EOC.

C: Joe Schweigart, Interim Executive Director
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